



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GOVERNOR KICKS OFF 'ARIZONA INNOVATION AWARDS'
Rewards Initiatives, Projects that Promote Innovation, Technology

PHOENIX – Governor Janet Napolitano today unveiled the “Governor’s Arizona Innovation Awards.” The program recognizes education initiatives, companies, individuals and government entities that promote innovation, math and science and/or create a spirit of entrepreneurship that advances Arizona in the global economy.

Mark Riley, Ph.D, an Associate Professor of Agriculture/Biosystems Engineering at the University of Arizona in Tucson, is the first winner of an “Arizona Innovation Award.” Dr. Riley co-owns RediRipe© LLC, a company that is developing a device that can detect when a piece of fruit is ripe. Determining whether produce is ready for market is more of an art than a science, making it difficult for farmers to test their crops. As a result, growers and grocers may end up discarding large amounts of fruit because it ripens or rots before it can be sold. Riley’s team has taken the concept of the sticker and created a workable sensor device that can detect when produce is ripe. Named the RediRipe© sticker, it is applied to fruit to determine whether it is ready for market.

The device is being supported by the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission and a grant from the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The sticker is undergoing further trials, but could be available to produce growers and consumers in the near future. This device has the potential to work for apples, pears, peaches, melons, tomatoes and avocados.

“Innovation is the key to success in our global economy,” said Napolitano. “Dr. Riley and his team have shown us a great example of the positive results that can come from using innovative ideas in business. This new technology can vastly improve Arizona’s agricultural industry.”

Governor Napolitano is current chair of the National Governors Association, and has spearheaded Innovation America as her signature initiative. Innovation America focuses on improving states’ abilities to compete in the global economy by providing opportunities for increased science, technology, engineering and math in K-12 education, enabling post-secondary education to better support innovation, and creating state policies that foster innovation in business. For more information, visit www.nga.org.

Nominations for Arizona Innovation Awards can be submitted online at www.azcommerce.com/innovation%20awards.